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MOBILE ART FLOWS. TOURISM MOBILITIES AT THE MUSEUM

RESUMO

This text analyses the genealogy of the historical and social phenomenon 'mobility', bringing about a brief discussion on the particular phenomenon of tourism mobilities, in order to provide an understanding about tourism mobilities.

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Mobility; tourism; artflows; tourism mobilities

INTRODUCTION

The term 'mobility' holds a wide number of connotations and is... mobile. Not surprisingly, research directions on this subject prove to be incommensurable (Adey, 2014).

In this context, we shall focus on the discussion of the concept of '*tourism mobilities*'. The objective is to briefly present a research project: the mobile *art flows* that *cultural tourists* develop during the visits that they carry out at *art museums*. Such art flows, on one hand, are conditioned by the tourist socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, etc.); on the other hand, they articulate the time course of the museum visit with its space courses (paths to an interesting painting, trajectories to museum's services such as the shop or the bar, etc.).

Taking into account the aforementioned objectives, as well as the methodological issues, this text is organized in four parts:

(a) First of all, I shall contextualize, even if briefly, the genealogy of the historical and social phenomenon '*mobility*' (see Section 1).

(b) Within a second stage, it is useful to trace a brief discussion on the particular phenomenon of tourism mobilities (cf. section 2).

(c) Such debate helps us to understand the the projet as an object of study within tourism mobilities, widely defined as *mobile art flows at the museum* (consult section 3).

HISTORY: FORDISM, POST FORDISM AND ‘DOWNWAYS’ MOBILITIES

In recent history, the dominant connotation of the ‘mobility’ idea within space and time result from two major processes underlying the capitalist, democratic and modern societies:

In the twentieth century modernity, the road traffic routes were central pillars of *fordism* in its globalized socio-economic components of mass production, circulation, and consumption. Therefore, in the discourse of political economy, fordism is initiated through the social image of the ‘road’. It is also legitimated via the configurations and the narratives of the ‘motorway’ and later, of the *highway*, anticipating the protagonism of the automobile, as well as the generalization of the travel opportunity supposedly available to all.

From a discursive point of view, *post-fordism* and late modernity are legitimized through the notion of the ‘information highway’, essentially since the 70s of the twentieth century. Its latest configuration is the *digital social networks* and their inherent spatiality/ temporality, for example, cyberspace and cybertime. *Cybertime* means, among other things: (a) the hybridization between *asynchronous rhythms* (e.g. within web pages) and *the synchronous pulsation* (for instance, in Skype’s mode of communication); (b) or the fusion of both diachronic processes with *quasi-synchronous beats* across digital social networks.

‘Downways’ mobilities means a critique to the social and the cultural inequalities underlying both Fordism and Post-Fordism, as well as other social scenarios (linked to the knowledge society). In other words, mobile devices such as smartphones, often give raise to global and local networks that allow people to communicate collectively, although isolating and even ‘immobilizing’ individually.

Therefore, mobile technologies and their connections to digital social networks can also be territories and remarkable opportunities for the mobilization of citizens within the countless spaces and times of their daily lives. In other words, one of the aims of the mobiles is to act within cyberspace and cybertime as a way of mobilizing networks for *digital citizenship*.

TOURISM MOBILITIES

The global patterns and the scalability of mobility changed deeply in the last century. In such conditions, tourism is now a pivotal industry within contemporary societies (Barker, 2014).

Within the academy, the debate about mobilities is preceded by some interesting insights into the *Tourism Studies*. John Urry himself has given a sound contribution to such discussion in a seminal work in which the tourist became conceptualized as a *mobile consumer* (1990).

In the text “Sociologia da viagem: deslocações diárias e anti-quotidiano nómada”, Andrade (1993), departing from comments on John Urry, Dean McCannell, Erik Cohen and on many other tourism studies, suggested some concepts, such as that of ‘*inter-travel*’ (a fusion of several types of trips that characterizes post-modernity); ‘*critical tourist*’ (the tourist that develops a reflexivity posture regarding his own ‘touristic society’); and ‘*counter-tourist*’ (a local inhabitant or citizen from an western or non-western country who suggests an inverse or a reverse view of the visitor by the visited).

In another earlier published text, we focused on the anthropology of a *popular tourism* phenomenon which was frequent some years ago in Lisbon as well as in some other parts of Portugal and Spain: the collective travelling and the ceremonial meals undertaken by the self-called ‘Excursionists/ Dinner Groups’. Such groups have developed an original form of *mobile art* including mobile themes, e.g. depictions of the bus they used or about the places they visited. These visual images are social images of themselves as *popular tourists*. In fact, the excursionists include, within the images, utilitarian and symbolic objects that they carry with them or collected along their travels and brought home for recalling and reuse at several celebrations. Such *excursionist art* was exhibited at cafes and taverns where their associations were located, and usually located at central or ceremonial places inside the drinking houses (Andrade, 1986).

Tourism studies may dialog with other theoretical paradigms, such as the *actor-network theory* (ANT) (Duim, 2012). In fact, the ‘mobility turn’ is transforming scientific fields, namely those dealing more directly with space (Cresswell, 2013).

Global and local contexts include traditional, modern and post-modern types of leisure, within which the tourists may establish intercultural relations. In this conjuncture, the role and the nature of the tourist is profoundly changing, within an environment of transnational and interconnected social networks (Burns, 2008).

MOBILE ART FLOWS AT THE MUSEUM

Within the debates referred *supra*, a personal and collective research developed for several years within Sociology and Anthropology fields, reflects about *leisure, tourism, urban cultures and the arts*.

More recently, our research has been focused in the *museability* process. Museability can be defined as the aggregation of economic, political and cultural factors that condition the practice of musealization. *Musealization* is the confluence of the professional activities at the museum in order to translate an expert knowledge (scientist's or artist's) to a common language, understandable by most segments of a museum public.

At museums, this knowledge acquisition and meaning search is often pursued through *semi-formal or informal learning*, a process intrinsically different, in many ways, from the formal learning experienced at school. In such pedagogical point of view, a former funded project, executed from 2000 to 2005, was centered on *scientific-technological literacy* in the case of science museums at Lisbon. This research was recently published (Andrade, 2010).

Several other books were published on the course of a recent funded project, entitled “Comunicação pública da arte: o caso dos museus locais/globais”, dedicated to a theoretical discussion on *digital museums* as well as on their art flows within Web 2.0. and Web 3.0 (Andrade, 2011, 2016).

Art flows are relevant phenomena in the globalized world at several post-metropolis cityscapes, such as the socio-cultural spaces inside the museum. In the following pages, we will introduce briefly a research project reflecting on *mobile lives*, in particular on those invested by tourists as museum visitors aiming to develop a *cultural citizenship*.

Considering this perspective, this project takes *public communication of art* at the museum as a central process for interpreting the *moves and mobile co-presences* developed by tourists and by other art museum visitors. Tourists are one of the most assiduous segments of art museum audiences e.g in the city of Lisbon.

The project was carried out at the University of Lisbon, Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, Centre for Studies in Communication and Languages, Portugal. It received financial support from the Foundation for Science and Technology-Lisbon (Ref. PDCT/CCI/68595/2006), and was conducted in partnership with several cultural institutions: Berardo Collection Museum (Lisbon), Institute of Museums and Conservation (Lisbon), Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (Lisbon), Serralves Foundation (Oporto), etc..

Two main actions were accomplished

1) a *sociological analysis of mobile strategies*, both physical and mobile fluidities involved in public communication of art and its reception by tourists within physical and virtual museums.

2) the implementation of an intermedia physical device used by tourists, a *multitouch table for interactive consultation of art works* within public museums, connected with its virtual part, an *internet site*. Both were undertaken at artist Joana Vasconcelos' exhibition named 'Without a Web', at Berardo Collection Museum, Lisbon, from 1st March to 18th May 2010.

CONCLUSION

Deeper reflections are possible to explore further dimensions of mobile art flows experimented by tourists at the museum visit. For instance, *public communication of art* can be interpreted through the modes and media of *messages sharing* at the museum, e.g. via the exchange of information among the main museum actors, such as the artist, the curator and the tourist public.

In a second stage, these developments may elucidate how networks at the museum connect with the *inner-mobilities associated with the tourist embodiment of art*. One example of such embodiments is the identification of tourist visitors with the characters visible at paintings, representing the society and culture he/she visits.

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